

Dear FCC,

I am writing as a Vermont resident who is very upset and concerned about the proposed buyout of UniceL by Verizon.

For many years, the small rural state of Vermont has been lucky to have an alternative to the consumer-unfriendly cellular corporations of Verizon, Sprint, AT&T, Nextel, etc. I have lived in Vermont all my life, and have had to deal with Verizon on countless occasions, even before they were "Verizon". The years I had to settle for them for landline phone service were frustrating and painful. Fortunately where I live now, I have someone else (Champlain Valley Telecom). Verizon could learn quite a bit about customer service from CVT, as well as UniceL.

Back when I got my first cell phone 10+ years ago from what was then Cellular One, one of my primary reasons was that they were NOT Verizon. I immediately enjoyed superior customer-service, better plans with more-features, lower rates, and better coverage. The coverage came from the simple fact that Cellular One focused their resources on the local rural market, versus Verizon having to spread themselves thin across the country, often focusing on much more-lucrative markets long before Vermont was considered (case in-point: how long it took Middlebury to get DSL service, while surrounding towns such as Cornwall and Bristol who were served by smaller telcom companies had it years before).

As Cellular One upgraded from AMPS (analog) technology to TDMA, and later GSM and a name-change, these aspects never changed: Better plans. More features. More minutes. More coverage. Vastly better customer service. Consistently. While Verizon seemed to focus more on their commercials and gimmicks than any of those "minor" things. As an IT administrator and consultant, many of my clients unfortunately are Verizon customers, whether it be for landline telephone, DSL, or cellular service... which has allowed me to constantly also get a feel for Verizon's technology and customer-service all along. I can truthfully say that they have only gotten worse, which many customers only remaining customers because they don't have a choice (or in the case of cellular, didn't know of UniceL/CellularOne).

One of my happiest moments was when UniceL did their recent technology upgrade to GSM. This progressive move to the technology used by the rest

of the world (aside from the USA) could not have been pulled off by an oversized corporate behemoth such as Verizon. What a refreshing pleasure to have my choice of unlocked, un-crippled phones... available from any vendor on the internet from anywhere in the world... needing nothing but my Unicel "SIM card" to upgrade/replace from phone to phone. Such bliss has been enjoyed by Europe and most other countries for many years... places that look at our archaic cellular service in the USA and wonder why we put up with such abuse from our carriers who seem to be stuck in the dark-ages, with Verizon doing the equivalent of forcing customers to lease their phones from the phone company.

When I heard the horrible news of the acquisition, my heart sank and I literally felt ill. The ramifications both for me personally and on the Vermont (and beyond) population as a whole were staggering. I can't imagine giving up everything that Unicel has worked so hard to provide. I certainly can't imagine dealing with Verizon. I seriously would go without a cell phone before I became a Verizon Wireless customer. But what are my choices? Sprint, Nextel, AT&T, USCC, etc all have such limited coverage in Vermont that they should not even be allowed to sell phones here (yet they do). Unicel was the only one who competed with Verizon, with "trounced" being a more-appropriate word. I simply can't imagine having to downgrade my GSM phone to a Verizon CDMA (with Verizon being notorious for feature-limiting and crippling their phones in order to extort more money from the consumer), and having to pay twice as much for a worse cellular plan from Verizon, AND dealing with their customer service on top of all that. Not to mention the technically-advanced things I do with my phone which are quite simply not technically possible with Verizon's phones due to how they cripple them.

A technical discussion of frequencies is probably outside the scope of this appeal, but suffice it to say that another benefit of Unicel was their choice of a lower frequency, which allowed more penetration and coverage in a rural and mountainous area like Vermont when compared to Verizon's towers.

I am not sure what position you are in to intervene. Perhaps none. But if there is anything that can be done, any hope that could prevent goliath eating David and Vermont's Eden of cellular coverage going down the proverbial drain, then I appeal to you to make all possible effort

to do so. Losing Unicef to the likes of Verizon would set Vermont back so much technologically that I honestly am not sure how I could cope as an IT professional dependent on his cell phone. It would've been far-better for some other carrier who uses GSM (such as T-Mobile or AT&T) to buy Unicef if Unicef truly needed to be bought, but a purchase by Verizon is the worst possible scenario come true.

Please do what you can to block this cellular nightmare. Thank you.